

The President's Daily Brief

13 June 1969

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

SOVIET AFFAIRS

The summary of Husak's speech Wednesday before the international Communist conference, as released by Prague, shows that the Czechoslovak party chief stopped well short of backing the Soviet invasion last August. Although Husak criticized the Italian and Australian references to the invasion as unwarranted interference in internal affairs by parties not knowing the facts, he also was careful to point out that the situation in Czechoslovakia--from Dubcek's election in January 1968 to date--has never represented a diversion from socialism. He further pointed out that there had been enough internal strength to protect "socialist achievements" last August, and though he mentioned weaknesses existing in the party leadership and social structure at the time, he probably meant to imply that Prague could have handled the situation without Moscow's help.

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A number of Soviet ambassadors to non-Communist Asia have been recalled to Moscow, presumably for a comprehensive review of foreign policy in that part of the world. So far we have no reports that diplomats in Asian Communist countries are to be included.

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Moscow probably believes the prospects of progress toward settling the Vietnam conflict are now greater and wants to formulate a policy for Asia in the postwar era. The Soviets may also be influenced by signs that China is cranking up its traditional diplomatic machinery again after two years of inactivity.

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Military activity in the Soviet Far East continues at a high level. [REDACTED]

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EUROPE

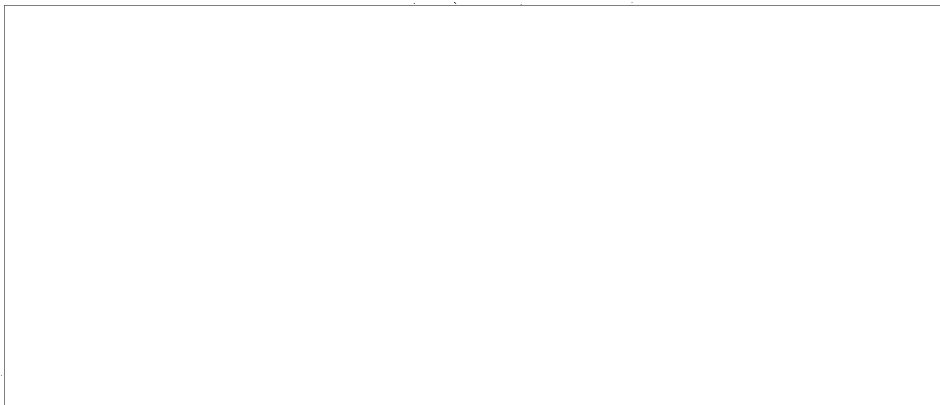
The French Communists have now implied they will do everything possible to assure that the party directive to boycott Sunday's election runoff is not ignored.

Jacques Duclos, the Communist candidate in the first round, stated recently that "there will be eyes everywhere to mark would-be cheaters who try to make voluntary abstainers vote." Duclos ostensibly referred to any attempts

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to rig the votes, but to many Frenchmen the implication was that "big brother" would be watching to scare off potential voters. A Ministry of Interior official stated that an abstention rate of 60 percent or higher among Communist voters was not unreasonable.

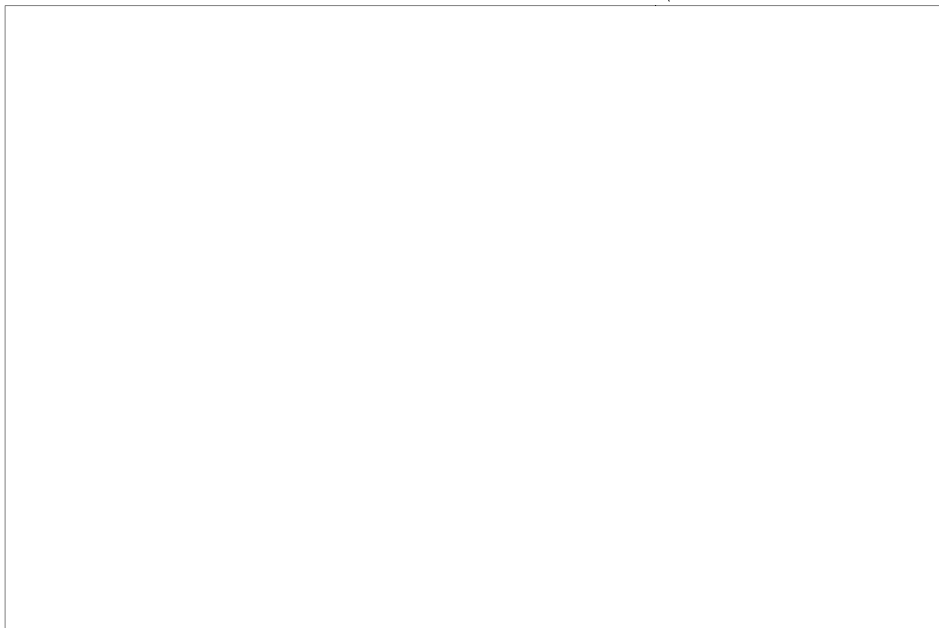
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VIETNAM

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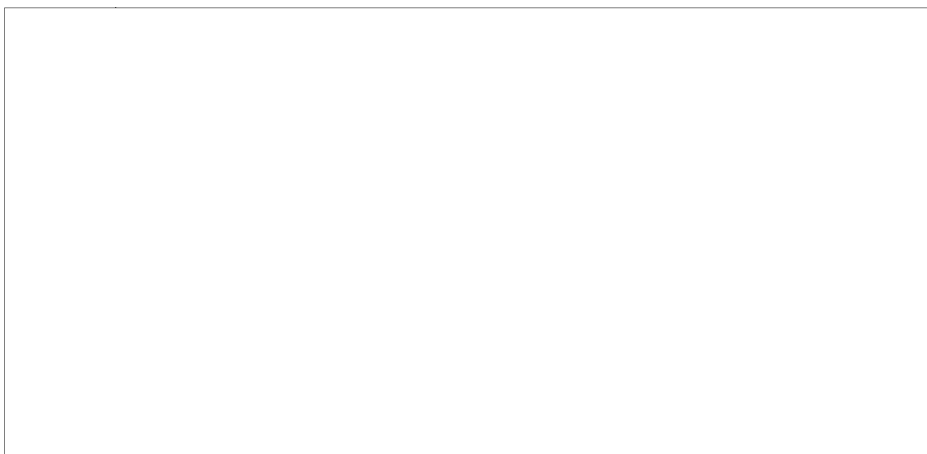


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MIDDLE EAST



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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

KOREA

South Korean security forces lured a North Korean agent boat into a carefully prepared trap yesterday off the southwestern coast of South Korea. The 75-ton "spy ship" had been sent by Pyongyang to exfiltrate an agent who had been secretly captured and doubled by the South Korean CIA late in May. The boat sank and its crew are all dead. A similar trap, set last August on Cheju Island, also resulted in the loss of a North

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Korean boat. This incident comes in the wake of the abortive landing attempt, on the east coast of South Korea last Sunday, by the crew of another North Korean boat.

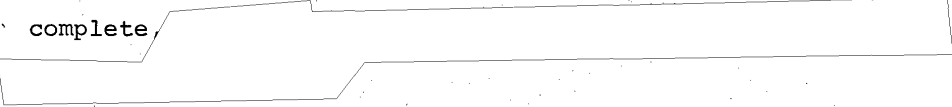
LIBYA

King Idris' recent acts of favoritism to powerful but widely disliked court hangers-on have tarnished his image and revived talk of removing him in favor of the ineffectual Crown Prince. At annex we discuss some aspects of the present political situation in this country, a classic example of slow deterioration toward instability.

LIBYA: DESERT POLITICS

Many members of the Libyan establishment--the tribal, religious, political, and military leaders who have traditionally monopolized the positions of influence under King Idris--are getting worried about the power Idris has permitted the two Shahli brothers, Umar and Abd-al-Aziz, to accumulate. The brothers, whose beginnings were relatively modest, have benefited from the King's favor over the years to such an extent that Umar is now one of the most influential advisers at the court and Abd-al-Aziz controls the Libyan Army.

Faced with the prospect of possible eclipse by the Shahlis, other influential Libyans are plotting against the brothers. As a rallying point for their activities they are using the Crown Prince, a colorless and ineffectual nonentity whom the 79-year-old Idris has never allowed to be trained for the monarchy. The King's recent decision to modernize the army, which would provide the Shahlis with an even bigger power base, has stimulated the malcontents to even greater efforts. They may try to move against the brothers before the modernization is complete.



Essentially all this plotting and infighting is a quarrel over who is to get the largest cut of the spoils, which have risen sharply with increased oil revenues. But there are larger implications as well. The Shahli family has long been known for its pro-Egyptian bias, although the attitude of

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its leading members have become increasingly conservative as they acquire a larger stake in things as they are. The family's numerous enemies, however, are totally committed to the status quo but are united only in their opposition to the Shahlis. They would almost certainly fall to quarreling among themselves if the King were forcibly removed or retired.

Idris himself has provided the cement that has held the disparate and antagonistic elements of the Libyan political scene together over the years. Were he to go--and particularly if he were to be removed by force--there does not seem to be a single personality or interest group strong enough to keep potential rivals for power from each other's throats. Moreover, instability in Libya is likely to have wider implications for the area as a whole.

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